

National Children's Study Questions and Answers

November 29, 2005

What is the National Children's Study?

The National Children's Study is the largest long-term study of human health ever conducted in the United States. By following 100,000 children from before birth to age 21, Study researchers hope to better understand how children's genes and their environments interact to affect their health and development. In the Study, "environment" not only includes factors like air, water, and house dust, but also what children eat, how they are cared for, the safety of their neighborhoods, and how often they see a doctor.

What will we learn from the Study?

The Study will examine important health issues, including: birth defects and pregnancy-related problems, injuries, asthma, obesity and diabetes, and behavior, learning, and mental health disorders. By establishing links between children's environments and their health, and charting their development through infancy, childhood, and early adulthood, the Study hopes to determine the root causes of many childhood and adult diseases. Findings from the Study will benefit all Americans by providing researchers, health care providers, and public health officials with information from which to develop prevention strategies, health and safety guidelines, and possibly new treatments and cures for disease.

How will the Study be conducted?

In 105 communities across the country, Study teams will work with health care professionals and community leaders to recruit women who are pregnant or likely to have a child in the near future for participation in the Study. Most families will be recruited door-to-door. Others will join through their local physicians' offices, health clinics, and hospitals.

Initially, researchers will collect information on women's pregnancies, including their diets, environments, chemical exposures, and emotional stress. When the children are born, and periodically thereafter, researchers will learn more from biologic samples and from air, water, and dust samples from children's environments. Researchers will meet with families in both their homes and in clinical settings, and data also will be collected remotely via telephone, computer, or mail-in questionnaires.

Who will carry out the Study in each community?

The National Children's Study Program Office has awarded contracts to seven Vanguard Centers, or Study Centers, to begin implementing the Study in select communities across the country. These Vanguard Centers will be the first to recruit participants and collect data as part of the decades-long research effort.

The Vanguard Centers are:

- University of California-Irvine with Children's Hospital of Orange County for **Orange County, California**
- Mt. Sinai School of Medicine with Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and Columbia University Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology for **New York City (Queens), New York**
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with Battelle Memorial Institute and Duke University for **Duplin County, North Carolina**
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Drexel University School of Public Health with University of Pennsylvania for **Montgomery County, Pennsylvania**
- South Dakota State University with Children's Medical Center of Cincinnati and the University of Cincinnati for **Brookings County, South Dakota, and Lincoln, Pipestone, and Yellow Medicine Counties, Minnesota**
- University of **Utah for Salt Lake County, Utah**
- University of Wisconsin-Madison and Medical College of Wisconsin with National Opinion Research Center, Marquette University, UW Marine and Freshwater Biomedical Sciences Center/Institute for Environmental Health, and Children's Service Society of Wisconsin for **Waukesha County, Wisconsin**

How were the Vanguard Centers selected?

Vanguard Centers were selected from a pool of applicants through a competitive process. These Centers have successfully demonstrated advanced clinical research and data collection capabilities, with the ability to collect and manage biologic and environmental specimens; community networks for identifying, recruiting, and retaining eligible mothers and infants; and a commitment to the protection and privacy of data.

How will Vanguard Centers support the Study?

The Vanguard Centers, which include a variety of universities, hospitals, health departments, and other organizations, will work within their communities to recruit participants, collect and process data, and pilot new research methods for incorporation into the full Study.

When will the Study begin and when will initial findings be available?

Over the next year, the lead federal agencies and the Vanguard teams will work together to develop strategies for recruitment and data collection. As funding allows, the teams will begin enrolling at least 250 newborns each year for five years beginning in 2008. They also will begin collecting information from participants. Initial results will be available in 2009-2010, according to the current timeline.

When will other Study Centers be announced?

The lead federal agencies hope to award about 30-40 Study Centers to work in a total of 105 sites, pending future funding. These Centers will be selected in a future competitive process like the one completed for the Vanguard Centers. The timing of the new competitive process is dependent upon future funding but could begin in 2007. Most of the 105 Study sites were chosen earlier based on criteria such as geographic and demographic diversity, number of births, and number of babies born with low birth weight.

Who designed the Study and how was it developed?

Members of the National Children's Study Federal Advisory Committee, including its working groups of more than 2,400 obstetric, pediatric, and environmental health researchers from federal agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations, spent five years helping the lead federal agencies design and develop the Study. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—through the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—and the Environmental Protection Agency are leading the National Children's Study with the help of researchers around the country.

Additional Resources:

For more information on the National Children's Study, or to view the Study Plan, map, and list of sites, please visit <http://nationalchildrensstudy.gov>. Members of the media who seek additional information or interviews with planners of the National Children's Study can contact the NICHD Public Information and Communications Branch at 301-496-5133.